

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



J. BRENDAN SHARKEY
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

March 4, 2014

Thank you Chairwoman Reed, Chairman Duff, ranking members and members of the Energy & Technology Committee for the opportunity to express my support for HB-5408 AAC Tree Trimming.

This legislation seeks to provide balance to the tree trimming process currently in place. I understand that some trees must be cut down in order to preserve the integrity of the electrical grid and to prevent widespread power outages, but after listening to the concerns of my constituents and attending various meetings and hearings in Hamden, it was clear that the tree trimming process is too heavily weighted in favor of the utilities and too often the objections of individuals and tree wardens are dismissed without cause.

The proposal before you places the burden on the utility to prove that the trees to be taken down are a hazard and that the public convenience and necessity require them to be cut. After conferring with Senator Looney and Rep. D'Agostino and the people of Hamden I would even take it a step further and strengthen this legislation by adding the following provisions:

- A semi-annual review and evaluation of the utilities' tree trimming plans. Each review shall include a public comment period.
- Require utilities to obtain written consent from property owners for the removal of trees on private property.
- Review and amend the definition of what is a hazardous tree and require each tree to be assessed by utilizing an industry-wide system accepted as best practice.
- Require utilities to replace a tree for every tree removed.
- Require utilities to grind stumps of removed trees
- Require the utilities to dedicate an employee with a direct phone line to answer questions, respond to inquiries and manage complaints or disputes relative to tree trimming.
- Allow a municipality's tree warden to make the final decision regarding the disposition of the tree. Considerations for their decisions shall include, but not limited to potential hazards, health of the tree and historical importance of the tree.
- Require the utility or state agency to prove and identify the right of way when there is a dispute over the removal of a tree on private property.

Again, I urge members of the Energy & Technology Committee to support HB-5408 AAC Tree Trimming. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this bill and the additional recommendations cited in the testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Brendan Sharkey", written over a horizontal line.

J. Brendan Sharkey
Speaker of the House